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Revolution in Hungary and the Crisis of Stalinism



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The Hungarian Revolution and the Crisis of Stalinism

Statement adopted by the National Committee of the
Socialist Workers Party at its meeting, Jan. 3-5, 1957.

The Hungarian and Polish revolutions have again demonstrated the leading role of the working class in the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism. The world struggle for socialism, which has experienced a rapid acceleration since World War II, has now been thrust forward with renewed power.

The Hungarian and Polish events have confirmed the view taken last April by the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party that a new stage has opened in the Russian revolution. The mortal crisis of Stalinism, which became manifest at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, was interpreted by the Committee as a sign of the intensity of the mass unrest and pressure, both in the Soviet Union and in the East European countries dominated by the Kremlin bureaucracy. The developments in Hungary and Poland, which brought the masses into the political arena on a nation-wide scale and lifted the struggle to a higher level, now make it possible to draw new and important conclusions regarding the further course of the death agony of Stalinism and the rebirth of revolutionary socialism as a mass movement.

The general reasons for the renewed motion of the masses in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were explained in the April resolution of the National Committee of the SWP as follows:

The victory of the Soviet Union in World War II, due primarily to the planned economy, altered the relation of world forces to the disadvantage of capitalism. The expansion of the Soviet Union into Eastern Europe broke the isolation that had fostered the growth of the parasitic

caste in the Soviet Union. The victory of the Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions ended the long series of defeats of revolutions which had further strengthened Stalinism. The repeated revolutionary upsurges in the colonial world weakened world imperialism still more and added to the forces favoring rebirth of revolutionary socialism as a mass movement. Within the Soviet Union the unparalleled rate of expansion of the means of production, again due primarily to the planned economy, increasingly shifted social relations in favor of the growing proletariat. Russia's backwardness, another source of Stalinist strength, began to give way with the advance of technology and education. The Soviet Union, moving ahead of the West European powers, even broke America's monopoly in atomic energy. These happenings undermined the foundations of Stalinism, a change that was bound to become reflected sooner or later in the minds of the masses of the Soviet orbit.

Thus, as Trotsky long ago foresaw, the successes of planned economy at home and the advances of the revolution abroad sharpened the internal contradictions of Soviet society, bringing them to explosive political expression against the totalitarian regime of the bureaucratic oligarchy that usurped power following the death of Lenin.

The post-Stalin policy of granting concessions to the masses and correcting the most monstrous abuses was evidence that Stalin's heirs recognized the gathering resistance to their rule. But contrary to the expectations of the Kremlin the concessions raised the revolutionary spirit of the masses and brought them closer to open revolt. The first evidence of this was a widespread strike movement in Eastern Europe that culminated in the uprising of the East German workers in June 1953. Use of violent repressive measures likewise did not halt the movement of the masses, for the East German uprising, put down by military force, inspired dramatic strikes in the prison camps inside the Soviet Union. In consequence of this ferment, the Kremlin decided to go even further in granting legal and economic concessions. In an attempt to associate themselves with the popular hatred of Stalinism, the top bureaucracy under Khrushchev's leadership at the Twentieth Congress opened an attack on the Stalin cult and raised the slogan of "Back to Lenin."

"This set in motion forces that will inevitably pass beyond the control of the bureaucracy," the April resolution declared; "for the Congress pronouncements on Stalin will become a banner for the masses in marching forward to completely cleanse the Soviet Union of the hated Stalinist system. It legalizes their demand for an end to Stalinism and a return to Lenin. They will know how to put this significant concession to full advantage. The Congress thus marks the beginning of a new, profoundly revolutionary stage in the Soviet Union."

The correctness of this estimate was quickly confirmed. On June 28 the workers of Poznan, Poland, went out on a general strike that grew into an uprising. Their action was symptomatic of the popular urge to extend the concessions made by the bureaucracy and to convert the paper promises about a return to Lenin into living reality.

Not a "Self-Reform" Movement

The pattern of events was much the same as in the East German uprising three years before. The workers' struggle began with economic demands; and, in face of resistance from the regime, was converted into a political uprising, culminating in the demand for the withdrawal of Soviet troops; that is, freedom from the grip of the Kremlin bureaucracy. At first the Polish Stalinist leaders acted like their East German counterparts. They slandered the rebellious workers as "fascist" agents and their rebellious actions as "imperialist-inspired." As in East Germany they relied primarily upon the Soviet Army with its tanks to crush the uprising.

Despite the tough line of the Kremlin, fresh concessions, much more extensive than in the case of East Germany, were won in Poland. Stalin's frame-up system having been renounced by Khrushchev the trials of participants in the uprising could not be converted into frame-ups and window dressing for a mass purge. Instead, the defendants were able to reveal in open court how the police had tortured them into "confessions" following arrest; they were able to voice their feelings about the conditions that had driven them to revolt. Some were freed and others given relatively light sentences. The nationwide support of the Poznan uprising forced the regime to

acknowledge that the Poznan workers had been slandered and that they had just grievances.

This restraint on the part of the Polish regime was not evidence of any Stalinist "self-reform." It was occasioned by fear that the Poznan events might touch off a general revolutionary conflagration that could spread throughout Eastern Europe and into the Soviet Union itself. The Stalinist bureaucrats decided to make another public display of anti-Stalinism and deal gently with the heroes of Poznan. But the concessions following the Poznan uprising represented a significant gain by the Polish workers, a by-product of their revolutionary struggle, and it inspired them to press for more.

In a bold move, the leadership of the Polish Communist Party deposed the Kremlin proconsul Rokossovsky. They replaced him on October 21 with Gomulka, a popular symbol of resistance to Moscow's rule because of his long years of imprisonment on charges of "Titoism." Gomulka demanded a greater measure of independence from Moscow, while the workers began mobilizing for a struggle. Stalin's heirs, including the top generals, flew to Warsaw to put pressure on the new government. Gomulka responded by keeping the armed Polish workers informed of the hour-to-hour developments. Minor clashes occurred between Soviet and Polish troops. In face of this resistance, which marked the high point to date in the Polish revolution, Khrushchev and Co. backed down, but on their return to Moscow they began mobilizing troops on the borders of Poland.

Hungary Aided Polish Revolution

The outbreak of the Hungarian revolution cut across these developments. If Stalin's heirs had thought of resorting to force in Poland, the experience in Hungary changed their minds. They made their peace with the Gomulka regime, granting new and significant concessions although these are far from meeting the demand of the Polish workers for independence and equality in a free association of the Eastern European countries, the Soviet Union and the Peoples Republic of China.

The Polish revolution thus made big gains, in part due to the struggle of the Hungarian workers. It is now

gathering fresh power for the next advance along the road of political revolution.

In Hungary the pattern visible in the East German and Poznan events appeared again, but on a greatly magnified scale. Much that was previously implicit now became explicit, above all the power of the working class and the forms its struggle tends to take against the bureaucracy. Just as the preceding uprisings were previews of the Hungarian revolution, so the Hungarian revolution is a preview of the coming struggle in the Soviet Union, a struggle in which we can confidently expect the appearance of what was lacking in the Hungarian revolution — a revolutionary socialist party capable of guaranteeing success.

The Hungarian revolution was inspired by the October 21 success of the Polish workers in ousting Rokossovsky and putting Gomulka in power in Warsaw. On the following day, October 22, students and intellectuals in Budapest, most of them members of the Communist Party, staged meetings demanding the restoration of Nagy to the premiership and the withdrawal of Soviet occupation troops. The next day, October 23, parades began. Demonstrators appeared at the Budapest radio station to ask that their demands be broadcast. Security police gave a typical Stalinist answer. They arrested the delegation. As the aroused crowd moved forward, the police opened fire. This touched off the revolution.

Subsequent developments can conveniently be divided into three stages: (1) the Nagy regime and the armed uprisings; (2) the crushing of both the Nagy regime and the armed uprisings; (3) the struggle between the Kadar regime and the Workers Councils.

(1) In face of the fighting in the streets, the hated Gero government sought to combine concessions with repressive action. On the one hand, it installed Nagy as Premier; on the other, it invited Soviet occupation troops into Budapest to put down the demonstrators. This was in accordance with the general policy followed by Stalin's heirs since the dictator's death.

Nagy at first collaborated with Gero. He called on the insurgent people to disperse. But as Soviet tanks began rolling into Budapest October 24, the masses took up arms in self-defense, spearheading the mass insurrection. Nagy

responded with appeals to lay down arms and surrender on the promise of amnesty.

The refusal of the Hungarian masses to place confidence in Nagy demonstrates that they trusted no one in the political arena but themselves. This is the classic hallmark of popular revolution.

Three more equally significant things happened — the Hungarian army went over to the revolutionists, the Soviet troops began manifesting sympathy with their cause, and on October 25 the workers launched a general strike.

Role of Workers Councils Decisive

Most important, the masses began organizing themselves. Councils — organs of workers' power — appeared on a nation-wide scale in the factories, the army and neighborhood areas. Dual power thus arose on the foundations of socialized property. Although capitalist restorationist elements maneuvered for advantageous positions in government, they were an insignificant force in contrast to the working class and its allies. The workers proved that in a revolutionary showdown they could crush all attempts at capitalist restoration just as they could defeat the native Stalinist bureaucracy, steering the political revolution on its true course toward the establishment of workers democracy. It was to preserve bureaucratic rule that the Kremlin intervened in Hungary, using the presence of restorationist elements as a pretext for its brutal assault on the working class.

In the absence of a revolutionary socialist party, the Workers Councils lacked the clear leadership and the clear declaration of aims that would have made the uprising unequivocal from the beginning. Nonetheless, all the available evidence shows that the working class, which was the decisive power, was bent on defending the social conquests already achieved, such as the planned economy, that it would not tolerate any attempt to return to the horrors of the fascism it had experienced under Horthy and under the Nazis, that its movement was in the channels of political revolution; that is, the building of a workers state freed from the bureaucratic abominations of Stalinism. Later events showed that the peasantry gave open sympathy and even direct support to the workers.

The Moscow bureaucrats were aware that a successful workers revolution in Hungary would immediately sweep across the borders into the rest of Eastern Europe and into the Soviet Union. They realized that the revolutionary forces were beyond control by Nagy or any other sector of the native Hungarian bureaucracy. The masses had taken matters into their own hands, were exercising their sovereign will, and had begun the process of elevating a completely new leadership out of their own insurgent ranks. Moscow, therefore, prepared to abandon the Nagy regime and resort to Soviet tanks as they had in the case of East Germany and Poznan.

On October 26, just three days after being co-opted into office, Nagy announced formation of a new "peoples front" government that would include leaders of former peasant parties. He abolished collectivization of the land, promised free elections and a "multi-party" state. On October 29 he demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Budapest. However, when reinforced Soviet troops again moved toward Budapest November 1, Nagy repudiated the Warsaw pact, declared Hungarian neutrality and appealed to the United Nations for guarantees and defense.

In a showdown crisis, this typical Stalinist bureaucrat showed his fears both of the rank and file of the Communist Party and of the working-class fighters on the barricades. He sought support among capitalist restorationist elements and their foreign imperialist backers. Nagy's course played directly into the hands of world imperialism which had already been seeking to convert the turmoil to its own advantage by picturing the revolt against Stalinism as a revolt against the planned economy of Hungary. It made such counter-revolutionary figures as Cardinal Mindszenty appear to the outside world to have much greater weight than they actually possessed. For a time it confused the picture enough so that in the absence of a revolutionary socialist party it could appear that the aims of the revolution itself were those implicit in the politics of Nagy.

Above all, Nagy's announcements and actions gave invaluable material to the Stalinist propaganda machine, which, as in the case of Eastern Germany and Poznan, slandered the Hungarian revolution as "fascist," "imperialist-inspired," and a reversion to "Horthyism."

The truth is that some 11 years after the Hungarian workers welcomed the Soviet forces as liberators of their country. Moscow's power lay shattered in Hungary. The puppet Nagy regime was torn between the restorationist forces and the proletarian revolution. The Communist Party of 800,000 members had suffered an internal explosion, virtually the entire rank and file and the lower stratum of the apparatus going over to the cause of the working class. The workers, together with the students, intellectuals and the Hungarian army, were in full-scale revolt and the peasants began supplying them with food. Workers Councils had appeared on a national scale and had begun to formulate revolutionary demands. These offered powerful confirmation of the validity of the program of political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy long advocated by world Trotskyism.

(2) Stalin's heirs had already made their decision. The second stage of the Hungarian revolution opened on November 4, three days before the thirty-ninth anniversary of the 1917 Russian revolution. As part of the Nagy government, lured into a trap by a promise of negotiations, were placed under arrest, Moscow ordered the overwhelming military forces that had been concentrated during the previous week on Hungary's frontiers to move on Budapest. These troops, spearheaded by some 5,000 tanks, appear to have been carefully selected from among the most backward sections of the Soviet armed forces. They had been lied to, being told that their task was to defend Hungary against a bourgeois counter-revolution inspired by American imperialism.

The Spirit of the Paris Commune

The blood bath began. Once and for all, Stalin's heirs demonstrated the idiocy of any belief in the possibility of their "self-reform." They showed in the harshest way possible the correctness of Trotsky's view that they resemble a ruling class in the tenacity with which they cling to power and the special privileges it assures.

What was remarkable was the heroic resistance of the Hungarian people, headed by the working class, in this unequal military contest. Their spirit was that of the Paris Commune which served to inspire generations of class-conscious workers. Though overwhelmed by vastly

superior military force, the workers did not end their political resistance. They refused to accept the Kadar regime that rode into power on Soviet tanks.

(3) The third stage of the Hungarian revolution is extraordinarily instructive. All the figures of the Nagy regime vanished from the scene; some of them in Stalinist hands were either shot or imprisoned; some took refuge abroad; Nagy himself took asylum in the Yugoslav Embassy only to be later tricked into capture by the Stalinist invaders. The weight of the restorationist elements that participated in the revolution for their own reactionary ends turned out to be in inverse proportion to the noise they inspired in the capitalist press abroad. The real power proved to be with the working class, organized in Workers Councils.

Backed though it is by the might of the world's greatest army, the arrogant Kadar regime finds itself forced nevertheless to deal in all questions pertaining to the rule of the country with the very antagonist it sought to crush, the Hungarian workers. The workers won this position by refusing to place confidence anywhere except in their own elected Workers Councils.

The blood bath — to the consternation of the Kremlin, we may be sure — failed to prostrate the working class or to drown its Workers Councils. The new leadership of the Hungarian workers, born in struggle only a few weeks before, continued the general strike, continued to hold meetings, to issue militant leaflets, to protest the arrests and deportations, to organize new mass demonstrations, and to repeat the demands which the workers had raised in the early days of the revolution — withdrawal of Soviet troops and the institution of workers democracy. The central demand of the general strike was for legal recognition of the Workers Councils as permanent political bodies with sole authority in the management of industry.

The role of the Workers Councils after the armed conflict was over demonstrated in the most convincing way that the Kadar regime has no base of support in the populace whatsoever. All the Stalinist propaganda about saving Hungary from "fascism" is thus shorn of the slightest shred of plausibility. Moscow's real target, as the whole world can see in the relation between the Kadar

regime and the Workers Councils, turned out to be the rebellious Hungarian workers.

The capacity of the Workers Councils to sustain themselves in face of the worst military and police terror is a lesson that will not be lost upon the workers throughout the Soviet bloc. The Hungarian workers made a priceless discovery in the course of their struggle — they discovered the form through which the political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy will be organized. The form is the same as that previously used by the Russian workers in 1905 and 1917 against Czarism — Soviets or Workers Councils. This form provides an arena in which a revolutionary party can develop with extraordinary speed.

Whatever the immediate fate of the Hungarian Workers Councils, they will undoubtedly prove to be the greatest single contribution made by the Hungarian workers to the political revolution in the Soviet sphere that will finally accomplish the aim they have so courageously and brilliantly advanced.

The Need for a Marxist Party

The absence of a revolutionary socialist party was costly to the Hungarian workers. This is not to say that they can be held responsible for its absence. As experience has shown, it is not easy to build such a party under the totalitarian rule of Stalinism. Lacking conscious revolutionary-socialist leadership, the Workers Councils failed to assert their power. They continued to negotiate for concessions from Moscow's puppets. This proved disastrous. While the leadership of the Workers Councils wasted time in futile negotiations with figures who had no real power within the country, the Stalinist counter-revolution mobilized its repressive forces.

(a) The leadership of the Workers Councils failed to proclaim clearly the aims of the revolution: national freedom and workers' democracy; the overthrow of the bureaucratic caste and the vesting of power in the Workers Councils.

(b) The leadership of the Workers Councils failed to systematically issue revolutionary appeals to the workers of all Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, explaining the aims of the revolution and asking for socialist solidarity in the common struggle.

(c) The leadership of the Workers Councils failed to systematically appeal to the Soviet forces, reminding them of their heritage in the 1917 revolution, of their socialist convictions, and of their own deep-seated grievances against the Kremlin.

(d) The leadership of the Workers Councils failed to turn toward the workers in the capitalist countries for help in preventing the imperialists from taking advantage of the situation.

(e) The leadership of the Workers Councils failed to arouse every section of the populace to its stake in the victory and failed to mobilize the nation for all-out military defense.

(f) The leadership of the Workers Councils made a fatal mistake in taking for good coin the promises of the Moscow bureaucrats to reform and to end the occupation.

(g) The leadership of the Workers Councils failed to anticipate Moscow's readiness to drown the revolution in blood and were therefore caught by surprise when the counter-revolutionary attack came.

Had the Workers Councils asserted their power, as they would have under a revolutionary-socialist leadership, this would have signified the doom of the Moscow bureaucracy, for their political appeals and resolute actions at the head of the revolution would have resounded through the length and breadth of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, bringing the masses to their feet with the blazing conviction that this marked the return to Lenin, the regeneration of the workers state.

The Hungarian revolution has already done much to assemble, within the Workers Councils and among the revolutionary students and soldiers, the cadres of a revolutionary socialist party. No other interpretation is possible of the breaking apart of the Hungarian Communist Party and of the refusal of the Hungarian workers to place confidence in either the Nagy or Kadar regimes. On top of this, the appearance of Workers Councils as the organized form of the political revolution demonstrates the readiness of the Hungarian workers to seek out and build adequate forms of political expression. The most necessary of all is the party, which brings conscious leadership to its highest expression. How bright the pros-

pects are for the rise of a revolutionary-socialist party among the workers of the Soviet bloc can be judged from many of the slogans that appeared in the Hungarian revolution. These slogans were the products of thinking minds, who, perhaps without even knowing it as yet, came to Trotskyist conclusions.

In opposition to this heartening tendency, it is now clear that the Soviet bureaucracy is shifting toward reliance on the armed forces as the main instrument of its rule. We now have three instances in which the principal means of repression was the army — Eastern Germany, Poznan, and Hungary. This signifies increasing importance for the generals in the top bureaucracy, a reactionary development. As Trotsky foresaw, a shift by the bureaucracy away from reliance on the secret political police has been accompanied by an increasingly repressive role for the army. The exhaustion of the efficacy of police terror has brought Stalin's heirs to the use of tanks and machine guns.

This expedient, however, will not save the bureaucracy. The social composition of the Soviet armed forces corresponds far more closely to that of the country as a whole than the secret political police. It is far more vulnerable to revolutionary contagion than the police, as all experience testifies, including the latest experience in Hungary. Moreover, the new climate in the Soviet Union, the mass unrest and desire for change, has its reflection in the armed forces. Already, far and wide among the Soviet soldiers, we may be sure, the story of the blood-letting in Hungary is arousing wrath and revulsion against Stalin's heirs. Finally, even if the Soviet military should prove solid enough to be used in another Poznan or Hungary, the entrance of the Soviet proletariat on the arena of political revolution will speedily win over the ranks of the army and disintegrate the Kremlin's repressive power.

Why has Eastern Europe rather than the Soviet Union become the scene of the first major revolutionary assault against the Stalinist dictatorship?

Kremlin Choked Economic Growth

Contrary to the boasts of Stalinist propaganda, socialism has not been under construction in Eastern Europe. It is true that the preliminary steps were taken by bureau-

cratic-military means after promulgation of the Truman Doctrine. The landlords and capitalists were expropriated and planned economy was introduced. Although these measures brought economic progress to Eastern Europe, they were at the same time utilized to serve the interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy at the expense of Eastern Europe. Had the economies of these countries been integrated through a general plan on an equal basis with that of the Soviet Union, and had they been fitted together in an Eastern European Socialist Federation, there might have been some truth in the contention that these countries were moving toward socialism.

However, the fact is that the Kremlin arbitrarily kept each country locked within its national frontiers and its economy just as arbitrarily locked to that of the Soviet Union. The economic policies imposed by bureaucratic decree undermined the living standards and working conditions of the masses. The exploitation of these countries has thus been analogous to that of imperialist exploitation of colonial lands. This alone tends to give an added revolutionary impulsion to the workers of Eastern Europe. Moreover, the workers have revolutionary traditions, including a record of socialist struggle under fascist or semi-fascist regimes. These traditions are continually revitalized by the mere fact of living under a foreign rule of totalitarian character. To this must be added the pressure of the peasantry who are aware of the post-war recovery in the neighboring lands of Western Europe and see no reason why they should not have a better standard of living.

The same factors that made Eastern Europe the initial arena of the political revolution also determined its initial form. The Hungarian revolution took the form of a national uprising against the Kremlin bureaucracy. It placed national independence — the withdrawal of Soviet occupying troops — at the head of the list of demands. Freedom from Kremlin control is essential to the creation of autonomous working-class organizations. It is also essential to the revision of economic planning in favor of the workers.

By placing itself at the head of the national independence struggle, the working class was able to make a firm alliance with other strata of the populace — especially the peasantry. Indeed, it is only under the leadership of

the working class that the century-old national problem of Eastern Europe can be solved and the basis laid for voluntary association of each national unit in a broader socialist federation of nations.

The bureaucratic-military way in which the property overturn took place in Eastern Europe created an additional problem in barring the masses from making a clean sweep of the old propertied classes.

In Hungary, these bourgeois elements appeared in the national independence movement, hoping to steer it back to capitalism. The triumph of the Hungarian revolution against the Kremlin would have cleared the field for a battle between the Workers Councils and these restorationist forces. Proof of this can be gathered from the fact that many Workers Councils were aware from the beginning of the restorationist danger and sounded the alert.

The advantage in this struggle would have been on the side of the working class. The weight of the working class organized in its Councils and in emerging independent unions; the socialized property foundations associated with working-class power; the attachment of the workers to these foundations; the clear signs of revolutionary working-class ferment throughout the Soviet orbit; the growing weakness of world capitalism and its lack of appeal for the masses — all these favored a socialist victory. A capitalist restoration is conceivable only through the crushing of the organized force of the working class by imperialism. This is excluded at present because the world relationship of forces is unfavorable to such an imperialist adventure.

Capitalist Reaction Strengthened

The Kremlin's repressive war against the Hungarian working class can be viewed only as an aid to capitalist restoration if it should eventually be attempted. The Kremlin aim is to atomize the working class and exclude it from control of industry. A Kremlin victory thus facilitates a primary task of the capitalist counter-revolution.

A corollary to the unfinished struggle against the bourgeois restorationists is the problem of political institutions. In every country of Eastern Europe, the Kremlin retained the framework of the old capitalist parliaments. The governments of Eastern Europe are all tech-

nically "popular fronts" based on the parliamentary system. The political revolution in each of the East European countries poses, therefore, the needs to replace the parliamentary form by the Soviet form of rule. The parliamentary form offers the most favorable opportunity for Stalinist bureaucrats and capitalist restorationists to check the revolutionary drive of the working class. The completion of the political revolution requires the elimination of this relic of the capitalist order.

The national character of the Hungarian revolution split the native bureaucracy into a wing that was totally subservient to the Kremlin (the Rakosi-Gero wing, subsequently headed by Kadar) and another wing that sought to head off the revolutionary developments by standing at the head of the mass movement (Nagy). The worker-CP members meanwhile took their place in the insurrectionary ranks of the working class, and in many key areas stood at the head of the revolution, playing important roles in creating and leading the Workers Councils.

Nagy stepped forward as the spokesman and defender of the bureaucratic caste. His short-lived regime was based on the deformed workers' state, but in seeking allies against both the masses and the Kremlin, it became a point of infiltration for restorationist elements. They favored the Nagy regime because its policies — a combination of the Stalinist popular-front program initiated by Nagy and the pro-Western orientation of the bourgeois, petty-bourgeois and Social Democratic politicians — would have immensely facilitated imperialist military intervention or an eventual reactionary coup d'etat.

The rise in revolutionary potential in the Soviet bloc is visible in the accelerating tempo of events. From East Germany to Poznan, three years elapsed. From Poznan to the Polish victory, less than four months. From the Polish defiance of Moscow to the Hungarian revolution, two days. The savage use of military force in Hungary will check the movement for a time, but as the lessons of the events are absorbed, a new rise should occur of even greater power. The antagonism between the masses and the bureaucratic caste remains explosive. The question now is whether the bureaucracy can find a new equilibrium in its relations with the rebellious peoples.

The political cost to the Kremlin of putting down the

Hungarian workers by armed force has created a crisis in Soviet policy. The concessions granted the Gomulka regime in Poland are sufficient evidence of sobering second thoughts on the efficacy of military violence. The notion of some bourgeois commentators that the suppression of the Hungarian revolution signals a change by the Kremlin to exclusive reliance on repressive measures is wrong. The Kremlin will find itself compelled to grant new concessions. **Revolutionary struggles win concessions and reforms as by-products.** This holds true for the Hungarian revolution as in the case of any other similar struggle. **But new concessions will only provide fresh fuel for the fires of revolution. The Soviet bureaucracy is thus caught in a dilemma from which there is no escape. It happens to be their destiny to preside over the death agony of Stalinism.**

The repercussions of the Hungarian revolution were world-wide. One reason for the enormous publicity was the tender solicitude the imperialist powers showed for the fate of the Hungarian people as Britain and France launched their blitzkrieg on Egypt. As always, the guardians of the capitalist system sought to take advantage of this fresh crime of Stalinism, utilizing it to smear the idea and program of socialism; and the Kremlin butchers did much to facilitate the imperialist objectives.

The Eisenhower administration repeated the pattern it followed in the East German uprising, at first posing as the patron saint of the rebels and then permitting its ardor to flag as the class character of the revolutionary upsurge became clear. In East Germany, Dulles' benevolent interest in the uprising reached its high point in the Packages from Eisenhower campaign. In the case of Hungary, the State Department had to go further, admitting token numbers of refugee immigrants from the strife-torn country. It was noteworthy that as the weakness of the Kadar regime and the strength of the Workers Councils became manifest, the excitement of the would-be capitalist "liberators" over their prospects in the Hungarian revolution died down. They advised against armed uprisings. As in East Germany, they found a genuine workers' revolution not to their liking even though directed against Stalinism. The reason for that is plain enough. "Liberation" through imperialist intervention is one thing. Workers revolution is a different matter.

Socialist solidarity with the heroic Hungarian rebels has nothing in common with the hypocritical tears shed in the capitalist press by the imperialists and their agents. Socialist support of the Hungarian revolution rests on furtherance of the class struggle at home. A militant worker in an American plant who wants to help the Hungarian fighters stands at opposite poles from the Big Business publication that seeks to convert Cardinal Mindszenty into a new Horthy. After discounting the Catholic-inspired demonstrations and the capitalist editorial rhetoric, the hard fact remains that proletarian sympathy for the Hungarian bid for freedom was profound. Workers were stirred everywhere. The Stalinist bureaucracy, in their eyes, stood discredited as never before.

The effect of the Hungarian events on the world-wide crisis of Stalinism was immediate and devastating. Already profoundly disturbed by the revelations about Stalin at the Twentieth Congress, rank and file Communists gagged at the request to swallow the suppression of the Hungarian revolution by Stalin's heirs. Wasn't the shooting of Hungarian workers evidence of the same "paranoia" that the late dictator was said to have suffered from in the final decades of his rule? And how explain the revolt in the first place, a decade after "socialism" was launched in Hungary and three years after Stalin was laid away? Large-scale resignations from Stalinist organizations occurred on an international scale. Rifts appeared in the lower ranks of the apparatus and prominent figures who had long been in the Stalinist orbit moved away.

The major planes of cleavage in world Stalinism were described in the April resolution of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party as follows: In the top bureaucracy two main formations are apparent, an extreme right wing desirous of making its peace with liberal capitalism and an ossified grouping that is hopelessly committed, as a venal agency of the Soviet bureaucracy, to defending everything that comes out of Moscow. In the rank and file considerable demoralization is evident. Ranging from apathy to doubts about Marxism itself, the main tendency is to drop into inactivity and withdraw from politics. **However, many members are seeking their way to firm Marxist ground. Their willingness to start fresh, to examine the programs and findings of**

other working-class political tendencies is a healthy indication that the break-up of Stalinism will lead to a resurgence of revolutionary socialism.

This analysis has been confirmed. The Hungarian events served to speed up developments in the Communist Parties along the lines predicted and to precipitate decisions that were still in the making. More is yet to come as the enormity of Moscow's counter-revolutionary stand sinks in.

The Hungarian revolution and its suppression added new issues to those already causing fissures in the Stalinist movement. First of all, fresh differences cropped up between Moscow and Belgrade. The Kremlin admitted "errors" and "mistakes" in the past in Hungary, which it blamed on the Rakosi-Gero leadership, but argued that the use of Soviet troops in Hungary was justified to save the country from "fascism." Tito blamed the Kremlin for the errors in Hungary and included as an "error" the first use of Soviet troops after Nagy took office. Tito especially scored the Kremlin for its slowness in carrying out promised reforms. But he agreed that the Kremlin was right in using troops the second time to smash the revolutionary uprising.

It is obviously in Tito's interest as head of Yugoslavia to favor greater independence for the Eastern European countries now under Moscow's domination. To advance this aim he seeks points of support among the leaders in Moscow and in the Eastern European countries. It is just as obviously in Tito's interest as head of the Yugoslav bureaucracy to side with Stalin's heirs in suppressing a proletarian revolution which might leap across the Yugoslav border. Tito played a despicable role during the Hungarian revolution. He did not lift a finger to help the fighters and ended up by condemning and slandering them. When the cards were down, the fact that Tito represents simply a variety of Stalinism proved decisive — despite his differences with Khrushchev & Co. Because of his critical attitude and his reputation for independence, Tito's arguments in defense of Moscow were far more effective than anything that came out of Moscow itself.

To the right of Tito stands the leadership of the French Communist Party which gratefully thanked Moscow for all the numerous blessings it brought Hungary.

Continuation of Russian Revolution

To the left is the Gomulka regime, which cautiously criticized the "errors" of the Kremlin and just as cautiously, but significantly, refrained from justifying the use of Soviet troops in Hungary.

What stands out in the most glaring way is the simple fact that in the entire Stalinist movement not a single outstanding leader anywhere in the world took a stand in defense of the Hungarian revolution. Not one! They simply repeated variations of the arguments advanced by Moscow and Belgrade. It would be difficult to find more convincing proof of the decay of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the lack of reality in any policy based on the hope of their self-reform.

The Hungarian revolution has revealed with crystal clarity the source of danger to the progressive social structure of the Soviet Union and the East European countries. The danger comes from world capitalism on the one hand, and from the bureaucratic caste on the other. The evidence is now conclusive that the revolution of the Hungarian workers is a continuation of the Russian revolution of October 1917. In their aspirations, their conscious program and their organized action, the Hungarian workers are deepening and extending the social conquests of the Russian Revolution and are striking powerful blows at the bureaucratic obstacle to its extension.

The Hungarian revolution is thus a living proof of the Trotskyist thesis that the best defense of the Soviet Union is the extension of the workers revolution. The Hungarian revolution constitutes this type of defense in a double sense; it sparks revolutionary forces within the Soviet Union itself and at the same time contributes enormously to clearing the way for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism in the West.

By its exposure of the counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism the Hungarian revolution has further dissipated the baneful influence of Stalinism among the socialist minded workers of the world. This has opened new possibilities for the regroupment of the revolutionary vanguard under the banner of Leninism and Trotskyism.

The New Stage in the Russian Revolution

Resolution adopted by a meeting of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party held April 13-15, 1956,

A new stage has opened in the continuing development of the Russian Revolution. The masses of the Soviet Union, who were politically expropriated by the bureaucracy under Stalin and who suffered its brutal rule for nearly three decades, are evidently once again in motion; they have already forced far-reaching concessions from the ruling bureaucracy and more can be expected to follow. The international repercussions, great as they are, have only begun. The correctness of Trotsky's struggle against Stalinism bids to rapidly become a key issue among the ranks of the Communist Parties throughout the world. Stalinism, the main obstacle in the path of the world revolution, faces its death agony. Great new possibilities are now opening up for reassembling the world revolutionary socialist movement on a new plane and thus solving the "crisis of leadership" which has paralyzed the revolutionary proletariat. This is the meaning in brief of the death knell of the Stalin cult sounded at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

EAST GERMANY AND VORKUTA

After putting Stalin's corpse on display, the heirs of the dictator attempted to rule in his name as high priests of the cult they had helped establish. But this proved short-lived. To gain the time needed to consolidate their shaky regime, they felt forced to grant actual concessions to the masses and to promise more. These involved primarily better living conditions for the workers and a relaxation of the purge system. The concessions, however, served to hearten the masses who had already felt fresh hope with the death of the foul dictator who had ruled the Soviet Union with blood and terror for some three decades.

One of the consequences was the strike movement throughout the Soviet zone of Eastern Europe which culminated in the uprising of the East German workers in

June 1953. This was put down. But the uprising served to inspire workers elsewhere under the Kremlin's heel. Throughout the concentration camps stirrings were apparent. The most dramatic was the strike at Vorkuta where 250,000 slave laborers downed tools. These two events, the East German uprising and the Vorkuta strike, frightened the Kremlin. They revealed the mood of the workers and the abyss separating the ruling strata from the Soviet masses.

CONCESSIONS TO WORKERS

The result was the decision to give a really major concession — nothing less than Stalin himself. This was done at the Twentieth Congress, making it a landmark in Soviet history. In addition, other concessions — genuine concessions — were made. These included the promise of a shorter working day, an increase in social benefits, better housing, an end to lawless dictatorial rule, the rehabilitation of victims framed up by Stalin. But the greatest concessions were the promise to return to Lenin and the deliberate destruction of the artificially constructed image of Stalin. This set in motion forces that will inevitably pass beyond the control of the bureaucracy, for the Congress pronouncements on Stalin will become a banner for the masses in marching forward to completely cleanse the Soviet Union of the hated Stalinist system. It legalizes their demand for an end to Stalinism and a return to Lenin. They will know how to put this significant concession to full advantage. The Congress thus marks the beginning of a new, profoundly revolutionary stage in the Soviet Union.

The immediate reason for the concessions, as we have indicated, was the palpable pressure of the masses which has grown so great that the bureaucracy calculates it cannot be suppressed simply by sweeping purges as in the days of Stalin — it is more expedient to bend with the pressure in hope of avoiding being broken by it.

The growing mass pressure within the Soviet Union is a consequence of profounder developments. Most important of these is the shift in the balance of world power away from capitalism. The crushing of the Axis powers, accompanied by the extension of planned economy to Eastern Europe, was a blow from which the capitalist system has not been able to recover.

The tremendous victory over German imperialism, achieved despite Stalin's crimes, served to inspire the Soviet working class — already grown in size and skills to second in world importance — with new self-confidence. The incapacity of American imperialism to rebuild Germany and Japan as powerful military threats took away from the bureaucracy the specter of invasion which it had used for decades as a means of diverting attention from itself and securing sullen submission to its dictatorial rule. The post-war wave of revolution and uprisings that swept through the colonial world, above all in China where the greatest victory since 1917 was registered, began to catalyze revolutionary moods among the Soviet masses. These were furthered by the death of Stalin. The success of the Chinese together with the North Koreans in blocking American military power demonstrated in the most vivid way how drastically the balance of power has shifted. This objective weakening of the capitalist structure also objectively weakened the Soviet bureaucracy as a bourgeois growth upon the workers state structure. Tito's successful challenge was already an intimation of this. Thus precisely when the power of the bureaucracy seemed at its pinnacle, with vast new territories and populations brought under its domain, its fatal internal weakness was revealed. The Russian Revolution, heaving up again from the depths, has begun to break the bureaucratic crust.

In foreign policy, Khrushchev & Co. did not make any concessions whatsoever that could be interpreted as a return to Lenin's policy of revolutionary socialism. In fact they openly revised Lenin, declaring that imperialist war on the Soviet Union is no longer inevitable and that socialism can be achieved in capitalist countries along strictly parliamentary paths. These revisions signaled no change in the foreign policy followed by Stalin. In fact, as diplomatic formulations, they served to give notice to the Western powers that the slogan of a return to Lenin was designed to meet domestic pressures. The revisions were calculated primarily as reassurances to the capitalist statesmen that no return to Lenin is envisaged for the foreign Communist Parties even partially or as demagoguery for rank and file consumption.

FRESH BETRAYALS

At the same time the announcement of these revisions

was designed to facilitate new fresh betrayals of Leninism by the Communist Parties abroad. Moscow views such betrayals as a way of helping to secure a deal with the Western Powers. As in the time of Stalin, the Kremlin means by "peaceful coexistence" a mutual policy with imperialism of live and let live, or mutual assistance in putting down, derailing and heading off revolutionary movements of the workers and colonial peoples. The present policy of the Communist Party of France in supporting the French imperialist government against the insurgent North Africans is a case in point. Another example is the policy of the U.S. Communist Party in supporting the Democratic Party and attempting to head off all moves of the working class toward independent political action.

The attempt by spokesmen of American imperialism to make out the end of the Stalin cult as due to pressure from abroad is thus false to the core. The imperialists never had any trouble in getting along with Stalin. They even assisted him in building up the cult when it suited their purposes. The Social Democrats likewise never found the cult an obstacle to alliances and coalitions with the Stalinists. The acceptability of Stalinism to both imperialists and Social Democrats during the past 30 years is actually additional proof that the decision to smash the cult was due to internal pressures that threaten the rule of the bureaucracy.

That these pressures are proletarian in character is demonstrated by the simple fact that what the bureaucrats promise in breaking up the Stalin cult is a return to Lenin. This is the most popular promise they could make, the promise best calculated to appease the forces moving against the bureaucracy. A return to Lenin means keeping the planned economy but restoring the workers democracy that existed in Lenin's time. The slogan "Back to Lenin!" is thus a proletarian slogan which the masses will inevitably fill with their own revolutionary socialist content.

Naturally, this will not occur in a day. The workers are as yet unorganized. The bureaucracy will fight desperately as it nears its doom. The entire process will have its ups and downs and even reversals. The important thing is that the process has begun and in the final analysis it will prove to be irresistible.

'COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP'

The bureaucratic tops are seeking to present a solid front which they call "collective leadership." They hope to stabilize their enjoyment of special privileges, to end the uncertainty and fear that existed in their own ranks under Stalin's purge system. But at the Twentieth Congress itself nuances in the "collectivity" were observable. These can be expected to deepen and to be reflected among Stalinist bureaucrats abroad as the mass pressure takes more direct and open forms. The weakening position of the bureaucracy will, as in the case of all other similar formations in history, manifest itself in sharpening internal differences in which some bureaucrats can be expected to cast their lot with the revolutionary movement of the workers. Such splits, of course, are of subordinate importance to the appearance of revolutionary currents among the Soviet workers and the ranks of the Communist Party.

Differences in the bureaucracy will tend to break out at specific points involving what limits should be set to the concessions. Each new concession will cause fresh tremors among the bureaucratic tops.

Each new revelation constitutes a fresh indictment of their share in Stalin's crimes. The crimes go back to 1923 and include the crushing of the Left Opposition, the smashing of workers democracy, the slaughter of Lenin's entire generation of Bolsheviks, the murder of millions of peasants, the establishment of slave labor camps, the decapitation of the Red Army on the eve of war, reliance on the Stalin-Hitler pact to safeguard the Soviet Union, the useless sacrifice of millions of soldiers, the wrecking of scientific institutions, pillaging of Soviet income, repeated blood purges of the working class, imposition of totalitarian regimes on the satellite countries, the smashing of the Communist International and murder of working-class leaders abroad, the betrayal of one revolution after another beginning with the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, the German Revolution that could have prevented the rise of Hitler, the Spanish Revolution that could have blocked Franco, and ending with the betrayal of the great post-war revolutionary upheavals in France and Italy. Khrushchev & Co. will not willingly admit their guilt in these crimes.

HOW FAR CAN THEY GO?

Aside from the subjective aspect — and we must recognize that the Soviet workers can force the bureaucrats to admit a great deal — for the bureaucracy as a whole the concessions cannot go so far as to eliminate it as the ruling caste. To go that far would mean to accept the program of Trotskyism; that is, end the rule of the parasitic caste and replace it with genuine workers' democracy exercised through revived soviets, trade unions and workers' political parties. Above all it would mean the end of the special privileges that constitute the material base of the bureaucracy. In this respect, in its tenacious defense of its special privileges, the bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union is akin to a ruling class. The basic conflict is between the organized bureaucracy and the working class which is seeking to overthrow it.

Khrushchev & Co. are conscious of this, for they accompanied their denunciation of Stalin with praise for his purges of Trotskyists and other oppositionists. They are attempting to justify the early years of Stalin's rule when the cult was established and the bureaucracy consolidated its rule. And Pravda has already begun denouncing "rotten elements" — that is, workers and their spokesmen who want to carry the ending of the Stalin cult beyond the narrow limits within which the bureaucracy would like to keep it. By bringing the dead Stalin partially to justice for his monstrous crimes, crimes that were really due to the entire system of bureaucratic rule, Stalin's heirs hope to retain this system which they helped Stalin establish and which they now head. This aim sets the ultimate limits to the concessions they will grant.

Thus in conceding to the masses on the Stalin cult, the bureaucracy will find itself in a worse predicament. Taking this concession with relief and joy, the masses will demand more. Each new concession will further heighten the self-confidence of the masses and bring closer the decisive point where political revolution can break out in the Soviet Union. An attempt by the bureaucracy to turn back now to the use of savage repressions as in Stalin's time can precipitate the coming political revolution that will overthrow their rule. Thus neither concessions nor repressions can long delay the Soviet masses from once

again putting in power a government that represents their will. The bureaucracy faces a contradiction it cannot escape.

TROTSKY VINDICATED

The bureaucracy has no intention of rehabilitating Trotsky or of permitting the Soviet public to read his works. Yet despite their intentions, Trotsky's great struggle in defense of the conquests of the Russian Revolution against Stalinist degeneration is being vindicated point by point. All those issues that seemed to have receded into history are now being reviewed by world public opinion as if they were fresh living events. This is what always happens when the truth catches up with the lie.

The historical review became inevitable once the Kremlin began admitting the frame-ups of the final years of Stalin's rule. Already, in trying to appease the Soviet people who suffered some 40,000,000 casualties in World War II, they have been forced to go back to the key period of the infamous Moscow Frame-up Trials. The confession that Tukhachevsky and the other Red Army generals, plus some 5,000 officers, were slaughtered by Stalin in a frame-up confirms what Trotsky said at the time. The confession about the fearful costs of Stalin's policy to the defense of the Soviet Union confirms one of Trotsky's main charges against Stalin. In face of such admissions the verdict of the Dewey Commission in 1937 that Leon Trotsky and Leon Sedov were innocent of the charges levelled by Stalin and that the Moscow Trials were frame-ups gains fresh force.

In the Soviet Union itself, the whole structure of slanders against Trotsky must crumble along with the plaster statues of Stalin that are now being hammered to powder. The truth will begin to spread among the masses about Trotsky's proposing the first five-year plan, advocating industrialization against Stalin's opposition, collectivization against the Stalin-Bukharin bloc, friendly alliance with the peasantry, balanced production of heavy and consumers goods, continuation abroad of Lenin's policy of furthering the world revolution as against Stalin's policy of blocking it under guise of building "socialism in one country." Trotsky will emerge as the revolutionary socialist hero who joined Lenin in 1923 in

beginning the fight against Stalinism and who remained true to that struggle until he was struck down by Stalin's pick-axe.

This is certain to happen because the Soviet workers with their socialist consciousness will not be satisfied with the explanation that Stalin's crimes were due to his paranoic aberrations. In dumping the cult which ascribed all good in the Soviet Union to Stalin's remarkable personality, the bureaucracy will not succeed in turning the cult into its opposite, ascribing all the evils of bureaucratic rule to Stalin's villainous personality. From the Marxist outlook, how can it be explained that a blood-thirsty lunatic could become personal dictator in the Soviet Union? This question must loom large right now in the USSR. Marxism demands an analysis of the social forces making such a phenomenon possible. Trotskyism has already provided that analysis just as Trotskyism is now providing the Marxist analysis of the social forces bringing an end to the cult of this madman. Soviet Marxists among the masses, whose names we do not yet know, are surely making their own independent analysis, demonstrating that the degeneration of the Russian Revolution was due to the formation of a parasitic caste which put Stalin in power. When their voices are heard they will prove to be the voices of Russian Trotskyism, the leaders of the regenerating Russian Revolution.

Since Stalin usurped power, the Soviet Union survived the pressure of encircling capitalism thanks to the power of planned economy. The new property forms established by the Bolshevik Party under Lenin and Trotsky proved incomparably more powerful than even the founders of the Soviet Union with all their great confidence dreamed. Despite Stalinist degeneration and mismanagement, planned economy brought the Soviet Union victory in World War II against the full weight of German imperialism, the conqueror of the European continent. From the weakness of Czarist Russia, this country has emerged as the second most powerful in the world, the only one outside the United States capable of developing atomic energy out of its own resources. The new property forms have proved even more powerful than the Stalinist degeneration, for the Stalinists themselves despite their own intentions were forced to extend them by military bureaucratic means.

THE CONSCIOUS FACTOR

This long and painful stage is now closing. The conscious factor is coming to the fore. It is visible in the pressure the masses are exerting upon the bureaucracy. Revolutionary consciousness is moving toward reasserting its rightful rule in the Soviet Union. When this occurs revolutionary socialism will appear once again on a world scale — if this has not happened already by then — in the form of mass parties as it did in the early years of the Communist International. This time the power of socialist consciousness will prove to be decisive in the struggle to replace capitalism with the superior order of socialism.

The end of the Stalin cult is a great victory for revolutionary socialism. No worse mistake could be made than to dismiss or underestimate the significance of this event. The verdict of the impartial Dewey Commission discredited Stalin in the eyes of informed public opinion. The verdict of the very partial bureaucracy discredits Stalin among the rank and file of the Communist Parties throughout the world. This opens up wholly new perspectives for removing the obstacle of Stalinism and bringing the Trotskyist program to the workers whose minds are now being freed of the Stalin cult.

Trotskyist works now acquire burning actuality, with fresh facts pouring in every day to confirm our entire position on the Soviet Union. In historic perspective our movement is seen to have been preparing for this great turn since the days of the Left Opposition when Trotsky first organized the struggle against Stalin.

In contrast, the entire Stalinist movement, large and powerful as it is, finds itself in utter confusion and consternation. What doesn't it have to revise in its ideology? What book does it have that must not be converted into pulp? What pamphlet even? All its histories must be rewritten and the new ones will remain suspect so long as they attack Trotskyism. All the resolutions and pronouncements must be scrapped, the entire education of the rank and file admitted to be loaded with lies and perversions of the truth.

None of the groups in the Stalinist periphery can escape these devastating consequences. What are the

dissident Stalinists, for instance, left with? Nothing but a record of boasts about their exemplary loyalty to the paranoid butcher.

Those circles who pretended to be independent of Stalinism but who always managed to end up approving the purges and frame-ups and false confessions are now seen for what they are — either ignorant dupes or conscious apologists for the fiendish crimes of a modern Ivan the Terrible.

VICTORY FOR MARXIST THEORY

The groups here and there who decided that Trotskyism had been by-passed by history and that the wave of the future belonged to Stalinism are now confounded by each fresh concession calling the world's attention to the fact that Trotskyism was the only force that told the truth about Stalinism. The politics of betrayal narrows down for these groups to vying with the worst Stalinist hacks in providing rationalizations for the bureaucracy, painting up the desperate efforts at rehabilitation in face of the mass pressure as "self-reform" of the bureaucracy. Deutschicism, which leaves out the Soviet masses as if the bureaucracy were a rational autonomous power, turns out to be the ideology best suited to assist the demagoguery of the Khrushchevs.

Among the victories that the end of the Stalin cult gives Trotskyism in the field of theory, two are outstanding. The contention that Stalinism was the logical continuation of Leninism has now been repudiated by its originators, Stalin's own hand-picked political gangsters. They are forced to confess what Trotsky insisted upon from the beginning, that Stalin was not the continuator of Lenin but his opposite. The bourgeois ideologues who also tried to make out that Stalinism was the continuation of Leninism are not much better off. To explain why Stalin has been dumped and the banner of Lenin raised again, they must explain the differences between the two. Rather than do this they have for the present preferred to maintain a discreet silence about the subject.

The other theory that has been dealt a mortal blow by the new stage of the Russian Revolution now opening up is "bureaucratic collectivism." According to this theory, planned economy upon superseding capitalism becomes the

economic base for a new type of ruling class never before seen in history, a "bureaucratic collective" that exploits the working class through its control of the state. This view is a revision of the basic theoretical structure of Marxism, inasmuch as Marxism puts planned economy — in its full, rational development — as the essential and sufficient economic requisite for the coming classless society.

Planned economy has the capacity to eliminate the scarcity that nourished all previous class formations. The Soviet economy was confined to one country, and hampered and distorted in its development by a bureaucratic caste formation, parasitic in character. The caste, enjoying bourgeois privileges, represented the tendency toward restoration of capitalism. The caste is basically alien to planned economy and not, as the bureaucratic collectivist theory holds, inherent to it. It is parasitic and not exploitative. Therefore the caste lacks the stability of a true ruling class.

THE HYPNOSIS IS BROKEN

Trotsky maintained that in the Soviet Union the development of planned economy, as it revealed its enormous potentialities and heightened the industrial level at a new and unprecedented rate, would undermine the caste — not strengthen it — and create the necessary economic and social conditions for its overthrow. He predicted that the further development of Soviet planned economy would, therefore, be accompanied by increasingly severe manifestations of the basic instability of the bureaucracy's rule. Trotsky's Marxist position has now received the most powerful confirmation as against the novel theory of bureaucratic collectivism, for the first stirrings of the Soviet working class in the new stage of the Russian Revolution shook down the central ideology which had bound the bureaucracy together for three decades. Moreover, the bureaucrats themselves were forced to confess to the precariousness of their positions under Stalin, thus adding graphic testimony to the instability of the caste's place in Soviet society.

Trotsky's defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism has likewise received the most powerful confirmation as against the defeatist line of the bureaucratic collectivists and others of similar views. It was the new

self-confidence of the Soviet workers, gained through their victory in World War II, the consequent extension of state ownership and planning into Eastern Europe and the victory of the Chinese revolution, that resulted in today's demolition of the Stalin cult as a harbinger of the overthrow of the bureaucracy and the restoration of democratic workers rule.

The entire Stalinist movement has been hit by the most profound ideological crisis since its origin. The sacred Kremlin texts have been thrown into the ash can. The Stalinist parties are in a state of shock. The hypnosis that closed the eyes and ears of the Stalinist rank and file has been broken. They are now compelled to think. They are beginning to ask searching questions. Many of them, it is true, especially the older generation will drop aside in demoralization. The cynical hard core will continue to serve the new Kremlin masters as they did the old. The Stalinist youth, however, will prove increasingly willing to discuss with Trotskyists and the best of them can be won over to revolutionary socialism. Already, with deep shame, they are dropping the epithets they were taught to use like robots in referring to Trotskyists such as "Hitlerite agents," "fascist mad dogs," "cohorts of the Titoite scum," and so on. All the elements are present for profound differentiations within the boasted monolithism of the Stalinist machine. In countries such as France and Italy, where great mass Communist Parties exist and where the Stalinist bureaucrats are going to new lengths in supporting the imperialist government, the opportunities are especially favorable.

SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY!

To realize these opportunities, however, requires the utmost attention on the part of the Trotskyists. Aloofness to this work would be sterile sectarianism. We have prepared for this for more than 25 years. Now we must move in, and move energetically. Campaign methods must be used to bring the message of Trotskyism to rank and file Communist Party members. Our press must turn full attention to this task, attentively following the developments in the new stage of the Russian Revolution and making sure that the Marxist interpretation is consistently brought to the attention of the Communist Party rank and file. This means that they must be persistently sought

out, their attention called to pamphlets and books in our rich arsenal elucidating the events of the past that are now being relived in the world press and in the consciousness of millions as Stalin's victims are rehabilitated. The Communist Party rank and file can and must be made to know the truth about Trotsky's struggle against Stalin. They can and must be taught the truth about the stubborn fight of the Fourth International to keep alive the tradition of Leninism.

This campaign must not be viewed as a short-term proposition but as a sustained effort, primarily educational in character. The objective must be to win Communist Party members to the program of Trotskyism without the slightest illusions about reforming the apparatus that has been rotting for more than a quarter of a century. Some, it is true, will go all the way in repudiating Stalinism. But most of this apparatus, their hands dripping with the blood they helped Stalin spill, will sooner or later depart from the scene as discredited, as despised and as hated as the master they served. But the rank and file members who joined the Communist Party because they thought it was genuinely revolutionary will draw the bitter lesson of their experience and become key cadres in the reassembling of forces now made possible by the death of the Stalin cult.

The great victory won by world Trotskyism should serve to inspire the entire movement to follow up in the most vigorous way. The Russian Revolution by rudely pushing over the Stalin idol and forcing concessions from Stalin's heirs has again proved its vitality. We must now prove ourselves capable of seizing the opportunities it opens up for revolutionary socialism in other lands. That is the best way to help the Soviet workers as they move forward to a final settling of accounts with the Stalinist system.

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